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CARNAHAN

Lincoln





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ORATION

ON THE DEATH

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OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

Sixteenth President of the United States,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CITIZENS OF GETTYSBURG, PA.,

JUNE 1, 1865.

BY REV. D. T. CARNAHAN,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church.



GETTYSBURG:

AUGHINBAUGH & WIBLE, BOOK & JOB PRINTERS,
Chambersburg Street, near Corner of West.

1865.

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GETTYSBURG, JUNE 1, 1865.

REV. D. T. CARNAHAN,

Dear Sir:—The undersigned, a Committee appointed at a Public Meeting of the citizens of Gettysburg, to take suitable action touching the assassination of President LINCOLN, respectfully request for publication, your admirable Oration pronounced this day.

Very truly yours,

EDW. MCPHERSON,
C. H. BUEHLER,
DAVID WILLS,
CHAS. HORNER,
J. H. WHITE,
J. B. DANNER,
HENRY A. PICKING,
GEORGE BOYER,
EDW. G. FAHNESTOCK.

GETTYSBURG, JUNE 1, 1865.

HON. EDWARD MCPHERSON,

COL. C. H. BUEHLER, AND OTHERS.

Dear Sirs:—Your letter requesting a copy of the Oration delivered by me to-day on the death of President LINCOLN, for publication, is received. I would that the Oration were more worthy of the occasion; but such as it is, it is at your disposal.

D. T. CARNAHAN.

ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—

THAT was no ordinary event which hath wrought such a sudden and painful change in the emotions of the loyal people of this great Republic;—which, sweeping away all lines of party distinction, has blended all hearts in a common sentiment of grief. A few weeks ago, these hearts were filled with rapturous delight; cheers upon cheers rent the air; banners were flung to the breeze; merry bells sent forth their glad peals; grand national salutes made the welkin ring; and staid, sober men embraced each other as they met, and wept tears of joy, because of the signal triumphs with which God had blessed the national arms over the rebel forces, and in the prospect of a speedy return of peace to our bleeding land. And all nature seemed to be in harmony with our hearts, for never did opening Spring look more lovely, nor the smiling sun beam forth more cheerily, nor go down into the chambers of the west with brighter promise of a coming glorious day, than on Friday the 14th of April last. But in a night

all is suddenly changed. Abraham Lincoln, the twice chosen and beloved representative of our national sovereignty, in the height of a glorious career of usefulness to his country and to mankind, winning the applause of his countrymen and the admiration of the civilized world, is cut down by the foul hand of an assassin.

In a place of public amusement, and in the presence of more than a thousand citizens, the murderer, with all the cunning deliberation of an arch-fiend, obtains stealthy access to his presence while sitting by the side of his wife and two personal friends, accomplishes his wicked purpose, repeats a motto in which he brands his noble victim as a tyrant, and before any one could realize what was done, makes his escape. *The President is assassinated!*—is the startling cry of horror which pierces every heart and blanches every countenance in the capital of the nation; and, borne on the wings of the lightning, it penetrates every domicile in the land, and awakens the bitterest anguish, mourning, and woe. And, as if in sympathy with our hearts, the face of nature assumes an air of sadness, and weeps with them that weep.

Never, in the history of the world, was a more fiendish crime perpetrated. It was a death-blow aimed at the life of the nation, at liberty, free government, and the dearest interests of mankind. Its enormity baffles description, and fills us with a hor-

ror and agitation words cannot express. Mourn, O Columbia! mourn the shocking event that has bereft thee of thy beloved Chief, thy patriotic, wise, honest, incorruptible, noble-hearted, mild and forgiving, yet firm ruler—the Saviour of his country! Is there in all the land a man so base (I will not say, as to exult, but) as not to mourn over this appalling calamity? If there is,

“I would rather be a dog,
And bay the moon, than such an American.”

Every good citizen, whose moral sensibilities have not been perverted or blunted by some unworthy bias, feels that the death of President Lincoln is not only a great national loss, but a personal bereavement; and that Treason displayed its true Satanic spirit, and struck its foulest blow at the best interests of our common country in perpetrating his assassination. He was the people's friend and servant. He was elevated from their midst to be their Chief Magistrate, and lost none of his fellow feeling and warm sympathy for them by his promotion. The highest position in the nation, did not elevate him so high above the general level of society, as to remove him from all the ordinary sympathies of our nature. He was accessible and affable to all who sought his presence. His large, generous, honest heart ever beat responsive to the interests of all the inhabitants of the land and indicated the deepest concern in their welfare. Their good was his aim and heart's

desire; and their happiness his happiness. For his country he lived, and for his country — his whole country he died. And now, that a general wail of woe throughout the land reveals the depth of the nation's grief, we can estimate their sense of public and private loss, and the strength and steadfastness of the nation's loyalty. Party questions, political misunderstandings, and the exciting contests of men over them, which led our foulest and bitterest enemies to say exultingly of our government, that, torn by factions, it was going rapidly to dissolution; all this has in an instant disappeared under the wave of distress which sweeps over the land. Look at the vast population of the loyal States now, when in one great and calamitous visitation, the feeling of partisan animosity is overborne, and when all over the land there is an outburst of unparalleled grief, and tell me is it possible that these can be other than honest tears? Who does not see in this the evidence that the people, notwithstanding their party differences are sound at heart; and that herein, under the blessing of God, lies the pledge of our national safety amid all the difficulties which may threaten us?

Abraham Lincoln — who, though of humble birth and limited advantages, had, by the force of native talent, risen from comparative obscurity to a commanding position and influence among his fellow-men — was providentially called to the Chief Exec-

utive Chair of this great nation, at a time the most trying in our history. Treason had already perfected its dark plot for the dismemberment of the Union, and was training its armed bands for the work of blood and desolation, necessary to carry out its fell designs. State after State, under the management of fanatical demagogues, and in bold defiance of the will of the majority, was hurled into the vortex of revolution. The patriots of the South were either exiled, or crushed to the earth, by a tyranny as hard-hearted and cruel as ever made man to mourn. Treason soon developed itself into armed and organized rebellion of gigantic proportions, and with parricidal heart aimed its deadly weapons against a government that was always kind and forbearing, and never unjust or oppressive. Acquiring nerve and boldness with its advance and development, it soon presented a belligerent aspect and martial tread which defied all opposition, and made the pillars of our national fabric to tremble to their foundations. It was not only rebellion in the South, but treason in the Capital, and in the adjoining State on the North, that threatened the nation's life, and which rendered the Chief Magistracy an office of awful responsibility, and of peculiar peril. It was in these trying circumstances, that he entered upon the Presidency. And never did a Magistrate more honestly and faithfully endeavor to discharge the solemn and momentous duties which devolved upon him.

On leaving his home in Springfield, Illinois, for Washington City, a large concourse of citizens had assembled at the depot to witness his departure, whom, with deep emotion he briefly addressed; and among other things said: "My friends, no one not in my position can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. A duty devolves upon me which is perhaps greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never could have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him; and in the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support; and I hope that you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain."

The prayers not only of his immediate friends and neighbors, but of all well-wishers of their country, were offered in his behalf, and were answered. He was endowed with a spirit of exalted patriotism, of conscientiousness, prudence, forbearance, firmness, and devotion to truth and righteousness, which qualified him in an eminent manner for his responsible position. An intense desire to perpetuate the union, integrity, prosperity and happiness of his beloved country, became the ruling passion of his soul. Unambitious, he pursued no interest of his own apart from the general good of the nation. He con-

sulted the rights of the people, and of the respective States, as well as of the General Government, and meditated no invasion of the rights of either ; and claimed no powers but such as were granted him by the Constitution. Peaceable in his nature and public aim ; tender of the life and blood and rights of man ; having no ambition to gratify, and no personal wrongs to avenge, he resolved to exercise the power vested in him to maintain the authority of the national Government unimpaired, to defend the rights of the people, and to restrain, and, if necessary, chastise the disturbers of the public tranquility. It was in this noble spirit he addressed the instigators of rebellion on the occasion of his first inauguration :—"I shall take care, as the Constitution expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union shall be faithfully executed in all the States. — I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union, that it will constitutionally defend and maintain itself. Such of you as are dissatisfied, still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and on the sensitive point, the the laws of your own framing under it ; while the new administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either. In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no

oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government; while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it.'"

The war for the Union was forced upon him; and in humble but firm reliance on Almighty God, and the righteousness of his cause, he girded himself and the nation for the terrible conflict. "Never," said Rev. Dr. Gurley in his funeral sermon delivered over the corpse in the Presidential Mansion—"Never shall I forget the emphasis and deep emotion with which he said in this very room to a company of clergymen and others, who called to pay him their respects in the darkest days of our civil conflict: 'Gentlemen, my hope of success in this great and terrible struggle rests on that immutable foundation—the justice and goodness of God; and when events are very threatening, and prospects very dark, I still hope that in some way, which man cannot see, all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God is on our side.'"

This hope was the sheet-anchor of his soul, sure and steadfast, which held him firm and unmoved amid all the surgings and dashings of the angry waves of rebellion, in the darkest and most tempestuous night of our adversity. It inspired him with a moral heroism which made him equal to any emergency, and enabled him to brave all dangers and rise superior to all discouragements, when others were fearful and desponding. And it gave him a firmness of purpose.

a patient perseverance in the path of duty, and an assurance of ultimate success, which nothing could shake or destroy.

He endeavored, through the whole of his Presidential career, to discover and understand the leadings of Providence. And whenever he could hear the great Ruler of the nations saying, with reference to any line of policy, this is the way, walk thou in it — he unhesitatingly obeyed, without regard to the favor or the frown of men. It was in obedience to the dictate of Providence as he understood it — and I have no doubt he understood it aright — that he issued his ever memorable emancipation proclamation, whereby 4,000,000 of human beings were liberated from the shackles of slavery, and transferred from the aid of the rebellion to the help of the Government:—a proclamation, which, though at first by many regarded as somewhat questionable, both as to its propriety and expediency, is now almost universally regarded as eminently wise and proper, and imperatively demanded by the times; and as having contributed more than any other measure to the speedy overthrow of the great rebellion. Such a measure, he declared had not entered his mind as either wise, or proper, or necessary, when he assumed the reins of government; and was only adopted after Providence, by the irresistible logic of events, had educated both the people and himself up to its high necessity and righteousness. This proclama-

tion inaugurated a new era in the national struggle ; flashed new light across the Atlantic with regard to the relative status of the contending parties, and gave cheer to the friends of good government at home. It placed in broader light the fact, that the rebellion originated in the interest of slavery, and had for its object its extension and perpetuation despite the will of the majority, and even at the sacrifice of the nation's life ; and of course, that the speediest and best way to crush the revolt, was by eradicating its mischievous cause. It was an act of splendid statesmanship, which has won for its author the enviable cognomen—*The Great Liberator*—and will make his name live through all coming time as the benefactor of his age, and a blessing to the human race.

In his efforts to suppress the rebellion, and in directing our domestic and foreign affairs, involving at times, as they did, the most complex and difficult questions, he displayed a wisdom, a prudence, a penetration, a breadth of view, and a magnanimity, which, if equaled, have never been surpassed by any other ruler in ancient or in modern times. Even the journalists of Europe, who at first sneered at his capacity to grasp and master the momentous questions of the day, and cope with the wily power of the rebellion, had learned not only to regard him with respect, but even to admire his wonderful administrative ability. 'The London Spectator, an ably

conducted newspaper, has, in the number for March 25th, an elaborate article on the public character of Mr. Lincoln. It does not scruple to compare him to Washington in some respects, or to pronounce, that, with a more difficult task, he has reached a no less honorable success. After referring to the animated eulogium on Gen. Washington which Lord Macaulay passed parenthetically, in his essay on Hampden, it says: "If that high eulogium was fully earned, as it was, by the first great President of the United States, we doubt if it has not been as well earned by the Illinois peasant proprietor and village lawyer, whom, by some divine inspiration or providence, the Republican caucus of 1860 substituted for Mr. Seward as their nominee for the President's chair. Without the advantages of Washington's education or training, Mr. Lincoln was called from an humble station at the opening of a mighty civil war, to form a government out of a party in which the habits and traditions of official life did not exist. Finding himself the object of Southern abuse so fierce and so foul, that in any man less passionless it would long ago have stirred up an implacable animosity; mocked at for his official awkwardness, and denounced for his steadfast policy; tried by years of failure, before that policy achieved a single great success; further tried by a series of successes so rapid and brilliant that they would have puffed up a smaller mind and upset its balance; embarrassed by the

boastfulness of his people and his subordinates, no less than by his own inexperience in his relations with foreign States; beset by fanatics of principle, on one side, who would pay no attention to his obligations as a constitutional ruler; and by fanatics of caste, on the other, who were not only deaf to the claims of justice, but would hear of no policy large enough for a revolutionary emergency—Mr. Lincoln has persevered through all, without ever giving way to anger, or despondency, or exultation, or popular arrogance, or sectarian fanaticism, or caste prejudice, visibly growing in force of character, in self-possession, and in magnanimity, till, in his second inaugural Address on the 4th of March, we can detect no longer the rude and illiterate mould of a village lawyer's thought, but find it replaced by a grasp of principle, a dignity of manner, and a solemnity of purpose, which would have been unworthy neither of Hampden nor of Cromwell, while his gentleness and generosity of feeling towards his foes, are almost greater than we should expect from either of them."

Who would have expected such a glowing eulogy from an English journal? It does honor alike to its author and its subject, and places, in its true light, the illustrious character of that great civil Magistrate whose cruel death we mourn.

Oh! never was a noble motto more foully misapplied, than was that on the Virginia coat of arms, "*Sic semper tyrannis,*" *thus be it ever with tyrants—*

by the diabolical assassin to Abraham Lincoln. He a tyrant! Then is the mild, gentle, long-suffering, and forgiving father, a tyrant. He a tyrant! Then is the Benefactor of his 'age and blessing to his race, a tyrant. He a tyrant! Then is the Deliverer and Saviour of his country a tyrant. No! His error lay on the side of mercy, rather than on the side of severity, in the exercise of his official authority; in extending too great leniency not only towards the authors and active agents of the rebellion, but to those, who, while they enjoyed the protection of the government, were in avowed sympathy with its deadly foes, and giving them all the moral aid and comfort in their power, and were capable of plotting his own destruction and that of his Cabinet. It was his consciousness of entire freedom from malice and vindictiveness, that made him feel a personal security even among his bitterest foes, and which eventually cost him his life. Ah! his enemies, and the enemies of the country, knew not what they are doing, when, by the wicked hands of a mercenary villain, they assassinated President Lincoln. He was their best friend, disposed to extend to them greater leniency and a fuller pardon than they could expect. But, "whom God would destroy, he first makes mad."

God, in great goodness to the nation, having spared him to see the power of the rebellion crushed, and the forts and arsenals wrested from the Government four years ago, re-possessed;—until Richmond,

the capital and stronghold of the would-be Confederacy had fallen, and Lee and his once boasted invincible army had surrendered;—until the voice of the turtle was beginning to be heard in the land, and the dawning of a bright day of peace was beginning to dispel the gloom of war;—and until he had just completed a plan of rehabilitation on terms the most magnanimous;—God, having spared him thus to see his Herculean labors on the eve of being crowned with complete success,—to look back upon the evils of the past as all gone forever, and forward to that state of peace, prosperity, and happiness which lay before him, as the reward of his toils, and the happy term of his anxiety, most mysteriously permitted him to be cut down by the hand of a fiendish assassin. O, how are the mighty fallen! Well may the nation as it staggers under the blow, exclaim with Elisha, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!”

O ye enemies of your country and mine, was it not enough that ye had convulsed the land with fratricidal war—that ye had desolated once prosperous States and happy homes—that ye had sacrificed the lives of 500,000 men—the flower of the land—upon the field of battle, and tortured and starved 50,000 more in pens, and prisons, and dungeons, by a system of refined cruelty which defies the world for a parallel—must ye cap the climax of wickedness, and superadd to all the bloody slaughter which

has held high carnival throughout the land, the diabolical crime of assassination! The moving spring of the infernal conspiracy to cut off not only the President, but his Cabinet, and some of the prominent officials in the nation, lay deep down in the *cause* of the rebellion. The conspiracy was its natural remoter development, and was approved, if not matured by the Richmond Junta, and was the astounding event by which they intended to startle the world; its executors being only the mercenary agents of a power which authorized or approved of the starving of prisoners of war—of the burning of Chambersburg and the attempt to burn New York—of the robbery and murder at St. Albans, and the massacre at Fort Pillow—and of the attempt by means of infected clothing, to “unbar the gates of the pestilence” in our northern cities. Oh, the barbarism of American slavery! Oh, the Satanic villainies it engenders! Oh, the Pandemonium of its councils! Oh, the terrible diabolism of its conspiracies and its deeds! The rebellion, which was avowedly begun and carried on in its interest, and which has culminated in the assassination of the Chief Magistrate of the nation, has demonstrated what the conservative element in the land was slow to admit, that, in the language of John Wesley, “It is the sum of all villainies.” But thanks be to God, it has run its course. In its mad ambition to *rule* or *ruin* the nation, it has destroyed itself,

and brought ruin and disgrace upon its lovers and friends.

O Lincoln! Lincoln! who would not rather be what thou art, a martyr to thy country, followed to thy grave by weeping millions in whose hearts thy memory is everlastingly embalmed, and honored by all civilized nations of the earth as no mortal man was honored before; than the living head of the rebellion, with his assassin's heart and hands of blood, and the curses of widows and orphans on his head, at one time wandering like Cain, a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, and finally captured while attempting to escape the hand of justice in a female garb? Ordinarily, "a living dog is better than a dead lion;" but in this case, the dead lion is better than the living dog.

But the work assigned our illustrious President by Divine Providence, was finished, and

"His hour of martyrdom
In freedom's sacred cause had come:
And, though his life hath passed away
Like lightning on a stormy day,
Yet shall his death-hour leave a track
Of glory, permanent and bright."

His sun went down while it was yet noon, in the full blaze of his glory, while his eye was not yet dim nor his natural force abated. He was snatched away when apparently he had reached the zenith of a virtuous, successful, and glorious career—when his eminent qualities as a great Ruler were most fully de-

veloped—when blushing honors were thickest upon him—when he was more beloved and idolized by the American people, than any other man since the days of Washington; and when the civilized world had learned to appreciate his pre-eminent worth and ability, and delighted to accord to him the highest meed of praise.

President Lincoln, was a man of strong faith in God as the righteous Governor of the universe. It was this that supported and assured him in the dark and trying times of our nation's struggle, and inspired him with a hope which nothing could shake or destroy of the ultimate triumph of truth over error, and of right over wrong. It was this which led him not only to request the prayers of the people, but also to pray himself, that he might be divinely sustained and guided in his administration of public affairs; and that the cause of the Government, which was the cause of righteousness and humanity, might be made triumphant over all opposition. He not only *labored*, he *prayed* for the good of his country; and here was the hiding of his power, and the secret of his success.

Fellow Citizens, If you expected an eulogy on this occasion, you are doomed to disappointment. I cannot eulogize the incomparable Lincoln. His glory is above my eulogy. His eulogy has already been pronounced in tones of melting eloquence by the sighs and groans wrung from millions of hearts

oppressed with grief at their irreparable loss, in the land he loved so well; and the grand dirge has rolled across the Atlantic and bowed the civilized world in sackcloth and in tears. Eulogize the immortal Lincoln! His noble deeds and heroic virtues speak his praise. He who

"Has won the battle for the free,"

and rescued an oppressed and down-trodden race from the heel of the great Destroyer, has written his own epitaph in the hearts of a redeemed people, and all over the broad land which he saved from ruin; and his best eulogy will be heard in

"The thanks of millions yet to be.

Lincoln! with the storied brave

Thy country nurtured in her glory's time,

Rest thee — there is no prouder grave, ~

Even in her own proud clime.

Thou art Freedom's now, and Fame's,

One of the few, the immortal names,

That were not born to die."

But though our great and noble Chief Magistrate has been foully smitten down in death, the Republic still lives:—lives, without any diminution of its vital energies, without any deviation from its onward course:—lives, a demonstration to the world that a Government founded in the hearts of the people, and on the broad principle of equal rights, is not dependent for its permanency, upon the life of any man who may fill its highest office. That God, who made our late President the mighty instrument of

our deliverance from threatened anarchy, wills that the nation shall not die, but from a higher vantage ground, and animated with new life, and clothed with new power go forth to the achievement of more glorious triumphs for his name's sake and humanity's sake, in times to come. May the God of our fathers, and our nation's God, the God who hath preserved us all our life long, and given us the victory over the most gigantic rebellion the world ever saw, be our Rock, and Refuge, and Glory still.

And shall all the lessons of the past be lost upon us? Shall the immense treasure that has been expended, and the torrents of blood that have been shed, and the valuable lives that have been sacrificed upon the altar of their country, be all for nought? Shall God's judgments be abroad in the land and the inhabitants thereof not learn righteousness? Shall it be, that, though in the fiery furnace through which we have passed there was visible the form of the Son of God, we have come forth from the flames unharmed to be as forgetful of our Preserver and Sovereign as ever? Forbid it Heaven! Let us labor and pray that our trials may issue in our national exaltation and improvement; and in the making our land, Immanuel's land. Shall the spirits of our martyred patriots, from that of the lately murdered Chief, down to that of the humblest starved soldier, call in vain upon their surviving fellow citizens to rise to a higher appreciation of their national

advantages and citizen privileges, and never to risk for one moment on visionary theories the substantial blessings of their lot? Shall they call upon us in vain, to love our country next to our God; to reverence and obey lawful authority, and make loyalty to the Government and genuine patriotism, essential elements of our virtue, our religion, and whatever we esteem most sacred? Oh no! If we be true to our God, and true to ourselves and to the fair heritage they bequeathed us, they shall not call in vain.

And if the blood they shed in the holy cause of righteousness, humanity and God, shall serve to erase any dark stain of dishonor from our national escutcheon, and cement the Union in more indissoluble bonds than ever:—if every blood-stained battle-field and patriot-grave all over the land shall serve to inflame us with a deeper abhorrence of every spirit of lawlessness and insubordination, and inspire us with a purer and sublimer patriotism—a patriotism which, soaring toward heaven, shall rise above all mean, low, selfish, and party considerations, and make God and our country the great objects of life; and prompt to deeds of self-sacrifice, of valor, and of devotion even unto death itself for every high and noble principle which tends to the glory of God and our country—then, the mighty host of patriot-martyrs, headed by Abraham Lincoln, will not have died in vain.



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